

# State Vocational Federation of Teachers

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Testimony of Dan Thibault, Oliver Wolcott THS  
Automotive Collision Repair and Refinishing Department Head

## **S.B. No. 340 (Raised) AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE BY STATE EMPLOYEES OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY CONNECTICUT TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM STUDENTS.**

Government Administration and Elections Committee  
March 9, 2012

My name is Dan Thibault, and I am the Automotive Collision Repair and Refinishing Department Head at Oliver Wolcott THS in Torrington. It is my job to educate my students on how to work in the Collision Repair Industry. This task not only involves providing the information and developing the skills necessary to be a successful technician, but also giving them the experience of working with customers. For this reason, production work is an important part of my students' education. Members of the community bring in their cars for body work, windshield replacement, or paint jobs; my students are able to do that work. There is no better training than the real-world experience of production work.

Though anyone can bring their car in for service, we are losing an important source of production work by the current prohibition on State workers being able to have more than \$100 of work done in the school per year. At our current labor charge of \$18 per hour, State workers are limited to jobs that take no more than five hours of work. In my trade, that prohibition eliminates all but the simplest of jobs, jobs which are usually not educationally valuable. A teacher, a custodian, or an administrator who had a significantly damaged car and wanted our students to gain from the experience of repairing it could not do so. We do not advertise our services to the community – there is no money in the budget to do so – and therefore the people within the school are an ideal customer base for us.

In addition to the invaluable experience our students gain through working on customer's cars, production work is an important source of funding for us as well. As you undoubtedly know, our budgets have been slashed, and we can barely provide even essential supplies and tools to students. Much of the production money stays within the shop, and it is only with these funds that I can provide my students the material they need.

Allowing State workers to actually get work done on their vehicles, whether in my shop or automotive repair, is both educationally valuable and financially necessary. The current law reflects ethical concerns that can be addressed through policies and oversight. Like all of my fellow shop teachers, we want to provide our students with the best technical education possible. Senate Bill 340 addresses an obstacle to that goal. I strongly urge you to support our students and our system by supporting this bill.

Thank you